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THE WORK AND INFLUENCE OF HAMPTON GRADUATES

Teachers Williams

The great aim of Hampton Institute from the very beginning has been to train teachers. General Armstrong repeatedly said, "Make the teachers, and you make the people." With the opening of colored schools in the sixties there came a tremendous demand for colored teachers. Local white school officials as well as interested Northern whites felt that the colored teacher could be more effective than white teachers in colored schools. Hampton then as now was unable to meet the demand for trained teachers. Only a few years after the opening of the school, a Superintendent of Public Instruction of Virginia reported as follows regarding Hampton graduates: "The school (Hampton Institute) is doing a great work. Its graduates are in active demand as teachers for our public schools, and are considered by school superintendents as among the best teachers to be had." In 1884, Dr. J. L. M. Curry reported to The Peabody Education Fund the following: "'The record of Hampton's graduates is the test of Hampton's success.' They largely engage in teaching and do such satisfactory work that the applications for teachers exceed the supply." Just four years before this Hampton had reported that 90% of her graduates had gone into the work of teaching. It is significant that in 1917, thirty-seven years later, Hampton is able to show that 90% of her women graduates have become teachers. The falling off in the case of the men teachers is due mainly to the development of the Trade School since 1896. Nevertheless a large proportion of the men still find their way to the schoolroom either as teachers of literary subjects or as teachers of trades.

It may not be without interest to consider the following figures for Hampton graduates. They show the occupations in which they were engaged in February, 1917:

Men

Total number graduated		1024
Occupations		
Teaching	239	
Agriculture (not teaching agriculture)	48	
Trades " " trades	93	
The professions(ministry,medicine,law)	100	
Business	33	
Clerks	89	
Hotel	75	
Students	25	
Miscellaneous	6	
Unknown	74	
Dead	242	1024

Women

Total number graduated		758
Occupations		
Teaching	300	
Other work (Unmarried)	39	
Married (Housekeeping)	234	
" (Not ")	32	
Students	7	
Unknown	24	
Dead	122	758

Total number of graduates 1782

Graduates teaching 1916-1917 539

Accordingly nearly one-third as many graduates were actually teaching in the winter of 1916-1917 as have been turned out from the school in the half century of its existence. This number does not take into account the much greater number who have taught throughout the years nor the many under-graduates who have also taught acceptably without returning to complete their courses.

From the outset Hampton planned her work to aid the masses of the colored people. Accordingly she has dealt mainly with students from the country districts, the villages and small towns of the South. From such sources, even in 1916-1917, came two thirds of her students out of a total enrollment of 934. The aim has been to have these students return to their homes for work among their own people. Accordingly the greater portion of the Hampton graduates have gone as teachers into the rural schools. Some, of course, go into city schools and into private institutions, where they do well, as I shall show later. But the big, significant, yet often less showy work of Hampton graduates has been done in the country schools, and among the people of the rural districts and the smaller villages and towns. In fact the country districts offer a better field for the Hampton graduate with her special, peculiar training than do the cities with their highly organized, routine work in the schools. The country people too are often much better material upon which to work. And here too the masses of the colored people live.

It is difficult to describe briefly the work of these rural teachers. Much of its effectiveness depends upon many other things than mere good teaching in the schoolroom. The teacher's understanding of country life and her preparation and ability to enter into it sumpathetically, for instance, help wonderfully. And so do the nature and quality of her life generally in the community. Hampton does a great deal toward giving the necessary training for such work. So these graduates take hold not only of their schools, but of the Sunday schools, the church work, the homes and clubs, and often of the farms. They interest the people in larger and better living, and they arouse among the young people a desire for better education than is readily

obtainable in the rural community. They send some of their students back to Hampton or to other good schools. They awaken the people to the possibilities of better training for their children right there at home, and lead them to improve their schoolhouses, to lengthen, through private subscription, the short school terms, and to secure an adequate number of teachers for their children. They teach the children simple handicraft and elementary agriculture and train not only the girls, but often parents as well, to cook and sew and keep house better than they knew before. So, in a great many cases, these teachers become a directing, vitalizing influence for good in the community. Often the teacher is the one abiding, uplifting influence in the neighborhood, for, in far too many cases, the minister is not a resident and comes among the people only periodically. To the teacher the people look for almost everything.

In spite of the poor salaries some of the men and many of the women graduates of Hampton have remained for many years in their respective places and have thus rendered a continuously effective service. From a list before me I have selected 10 principals who have taught continuously from 26 to 38 years. Six of these men have spent from 26 to 38 years in their several schools without making a single change. From a corresponding list of women I have chosen 25 known to me, as were the men, who have taught continuously from 10 to 40 years. Half of these have spent their whole time in single localities. These are mainly strong men and women. Accordingly it is not strange that they have greatly influenced their communities. They are typical of many others some of whose careers are just as long as theirs, while others have not been so long in the field.

In recent years a new type of teacher has been developed for the rural districts, - the industrial supervisor, more popularly known as the Jeanes teacher. In this list of workers Hampton graduates, especially in Virginia, have played a conspicuous part. The idea of an itinerant teacher going from one rural school to another assisting the regular teacher and teaching simple industries to the children originated with Dr. Frissell at Hampton Institute, and was first put into practical effect by Hampton graduates in counties in Virginia. Later the work of the Jeanes Fund, which was also secured by Dr. Frissell, developed along these lines. Jeanes teachers are now employed in all the Southern states. They are the agents through whom the white State Agents, or Supervisors of Colored Schools, are doing their great work of building up colored schools. Owing to the industrial training which Hampton graduates receive and to the missionary spirit which is cultivated in them, they are peculiarly fitted to do this work well.

The teaching of industries mf is but a small though important part of the work of these teachers. They must organize the colored people so as to raise funds for the building and improving of schoolhouses, and for the general betterment of their schools. They are the leaders of all the educational movements in their counties in addition to teaching industries to boys and girls, and directing gardening and canning among both children and adults, to say nothing or organizing industrial exhibits and fairs. In these ways each Jeanes teacher comes into helpful touch with practically all the colored people of her county.

In city schools Hampton graduates have, with the notable exception of a number of successful principals, played relatively less

important parts than those that have gone to the country. The complexities of city life and the routine work of schools with a minimum of effective supervision allow little opportunity for individual initiative in the colored teacher. Nevertheless Hampton graduates have done well, especially in the cities of Virginia. The schools of Lynchburg, Roanoke, Danville, Petersburg, and Norfolk and Portsmouth have been largely influenced by teachers from Hampton Institute. They have been highly regarded by school officials. In most cases they have been able to give a more practical turn to the training of the schools than obtains generally in other cities. They have done this too without in any way lessening the efficiency of the schools in other respects. These city teachers have sent to Hampton Institute many of the best prepared students that have come to it.

Hampton graduates have held for many years principalships in the graded schools of the leading cities of Virginia and of other cities. Their long term of service is proof of their success. Where they have served under highly efficient, modern-minded, liberal superintendents Hampton graduates have not only done well as principals but have won distinction, as for instance, in Lynchburg and Roanoke, Va., in Indianapolis, Ind., and in Kansas City, Mo. At Winchester, Va., the principalship of the colored school was held by Hamptonians for 41 years. One man served for 33 ~~years~~ years. According to a report of the Superintendent of Schools of Kansas City, Mo., manual training was first introduced in the schools of that city by a Hampton graduate as principal of one of the colored schools. Gradually he won the attention and support of the School Board and was given a special teacher for this work. Manual training was then added in several other schools until finally in 1901 the city had a manual training

high school for whites, and courses in the subject in a dozen ward schools. In much the same way manual training in the grades and in the night schools was started in the school of a Hampton graduate in Indianapolis, Ind.

A significant number of the more capable Hampton graduates have gone into the private schools for colored youth all over the South. Here they have done much of their best and most far-reaching work. In handing on to other young men and women their training and spirit and sending them forth into the world as workers they have multiplied themselves many fold. Hampton graduates have themselves organized and established but comparatively few private institutions, but they have formed important parts of the forces in a great many of the institutions conducted by others. Such schools in Virginia as the Reform School for Colored Boys, the Home for Wayward Colored Girls, the Franklin Normal and Industrial Institute, the Gloucester Agricultural and Industrial School, and the Peoples' Village School, Mt. Meigs, Ala., and Tuskegee Institute are presided over by graduates of Hampton Institute. The St. Paul School, Lawrenceville, Va., perhaps the third largest colored industrial school in the country, has for its principal a former student of Hampton. In all these schools Hamptonians hold, or have held, the more important and the most difficult positions, and they have rendered invaluable services. The very efficient and unique Penn School on St. Helena Island, S. C. is, with the exception of the two white lady principals, manned almost entirely by Hampton graduates. And the same is true to a considerable extent of the Calhoun School in Alabama.

In the other schools where Hamptonians are usually relatively fewer in number, they are as a rule highly regarded as teachers and workers. They are loyal, reliable, resourceful, and conservative.

And they generally show the result of their good training as classroom teachers. In the schools of academic rather than industrial type, Hamptonians are expected to know how to do anything of an industrial nature, and are called upon for any sort of service of this kind. They are generally equal to the emergency. They are usually, too, good disciplinarians; the men especially know how to handle boys, as a rule, so as to win their respect and to get from them the best service. Hampton graduates are usually successful also as organizers and workers among the people of the community. So in all these very practical ways, in addition to carrying on their specific work in the schools, these Hampton men and women become very helpful to the institutions in which they work. Generally they form an element distinct for its services.

As teachers of manual training and trades, Hampton graduates are in great demand. They are employed from New Jersey to Louisiana, Oklahoma and Missouri, and they usually give satisfaction. The Hampton Trade School is undoubtedly the best for colored youth in America. Many of the other industrial schools recognize this and employ our graduates as teachers. They are employed at Tuskegee, in the State Agricultural and Mechanical Colleges, as well as in the smaller schools of the South.

Farm demonstration work among colored people has developed rapidly within recent years. Colored men have proven their peculiar value in this work no less than in the colored school. A Hampton graduate was the first to demonstrate to not only doubtful but prejudiced government authorities the colored man's ability to serve colored farmers at least as well and usually better than white demonstrators. This man is now at the head of the colored demonstration work for Virginia with a number of other Hamptonians under his

direction. A Hampton man holds a similar position in Mississippi, and another in Kentucky. And a Hamptonian is the leader in such work on the islands off the coast of South Carolina. Some of the most vital and substantial work being done among colored people is carried on by these farm demonstrators, among whom Hampton graduates are playing an increasingly valuable part.

As teachers of agriculture and as farmers for educational institutions Hampton men have done good work, as the Manual and Industrial School, Bordentown, N. J., Manassas Industrial School, Va., Hampton Institute, the Penn School, the Calhoun School, and Tuskegee Institute could testify.

The mechanics from Hampton who follow their trades instead of going into schools nevertheless serve as rather effective teachers of a kind. They show Negro youth what it is possible for them to become with training. Hampton tradesmen find plenty to do generally. I have seen them as carpenters, bricklayers, plumbers, painters, blacksmiths, printers, shoemakers, etc. in Southern cities and towns. I have heard only one complaint of them, - that they are slower than the men who get their trades as apprentickes. But this holds true only during their earlier experiences as journeymen. Since however this seems to be the case with all tradesmen who learn their trades in schools it makes no special reflection upon Hampton training. It appears to be impossible to create in the schools identical conditions with those outside. So the school-taught tradesman has to adjust himself to regular trade conditions after leaving school.

On the whole the Hampton graduates are regarded by those for whom and with whom they work as well trained, and as good teachers. They prove themselves all round workers in the schools. They are ready

to do the hard work, and to carry extra burdens when necessary. Last year a young woman employed as sewing teacher in a Southern school did her own work, ran the dining hall, and acted as matron for the girls for several months till the school could find a suitable matron. A young woman in a public school not only taught the primary grades but gave the boys of the upper grades woodwork because she did not think the boys ought to lose this work on account of a lack of training on the part of the principal, a man, who should have done this work. Young men employed to teach literary subjects are frequently called upon to make all sorts of repairs about the school or to teach industrial subjects in addition to their regular work. Usually they do these extras well and uncomplainingly, and carry on many other activities not laid down in the schedule. In fact they carry the missionary spirit into their work and do whatever they can for the good of their people. In this exercise of the missionary spirit in the upbuilding of their race, they are not equalled, said the superintendent of schools of one of the leading cities of Virginia, by the graduates of any of the white educational institutions of the State. They go out into the country districts to teach where life is not only monotonous but often hard and disagreeable. They remain and try to improve conditions. Only last week I saw a young man whose home is in Connecticut teaching in the backwoods of Virginia. One of the first things he had to tell me was about his Sunday School work. I have seen a Hampton girl cry over the hardships and loneliness which she had to face in her community but refuse to give up her work. Other Hampton women have devoted their lives to just such localities with the result that they have in large measure transformed them. And wherever they go they carry lessons of industry, thrift, order, cleanliness and good living.

As Dr. Curry observed of the Hampton graduates as teachers in the early years, they are conservative. They do not carry chips on their shoulders. They understand the ways and customs of the South and rarely have any trouble in getting along with black or white folks. Accordingly they are popular with the school authorities and readily find employment. In fact Hampton is still unable to meet the demand for teachers, although the classes are nowadays twice as large as they used to be.

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